

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
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AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: JANATA LEADERSHIP CONFRONTS RAJ NARAIN

REF: NEW DELHI 9578

1. SUMMARY: FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE PARTY'S FORMATION, THE JANATA'S TOP LEADERSHIP HAS TAKEN A FIRM AND UNEQUIVOCAL STAND AGAINST THE INDISCIPLINE AND FACTIONALISM WHICH PLAGUES RULING PARTY. THE JANATA PARLIAMENTARY BOARD REPRIMANDED RAJ NARAIN FOR HIS ATTACKS ON PARTY PRESIDENT CHANDRA SHEKHAR AND DEMANDED AN EXPLANATION FOR HIS CONDUCT. THIS STIFF ACTION HAS REBUFFED HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH AND ESSENTIALLY
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ISOLATED THE HARD-CORE BLD FACTION. BY SIDING WITH CHANDRA SHEKHAR AND THE PRIME MINISTER, THE JANA SANGH ELEMENT CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED ITS CLOUT AND ITS SUPPORT FOR STABILITY IN THE PARTY. CHARAN SINGH MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF FROM THE CORNER IN WHICH HE FINDS HIMSELF, BUT PARTY LLEADERS PRESUMABLY WILL TRY TO FIND A FACE-SAVING DEVICE. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT PER-CEIVE ANY SERIOUS THREAT TO THE GOVT'S STABILITY ARISING OUT OF

THE CURRENT SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. MEETING IN NEW DELHI ON JUNE 22, THE JANATA PARTY'S CENTRAL PARLIAMENTARY BOARD (CPB) TOOK STRONG EXCEPTION TO UNION HEALTH MINISTER RAJ NARAIN'S RECENT CAMPAIGN TO OUST PARTY PRESIDENT CHANDRA SHEKHAR (REFTEL). IN A TOUGH-WORDED RESOLUTION, THE BOARD STATED THAT IT WAS "PARTICULARLY DISTRESSED" AT RAJ NARAIN'S "TIRADE AGAINST THE PARTY PRESIDENT". WHILE EXPRESSING FULL CONFIDENCE IN CHANDRA SHEKHAR, THE CPB ASKED THE HEALTH MINISTER TO "DESIST" FROM HIS CAMPAIGN AND SOUGHT AN EXPLANATION FROM HIM "FOR THE PERSONAL ATTACKS HE HAS BEEN MAKING ON THE PARTY PRESIDENT". THE BOARD ALSO REJECTED RAJ NARAIN'S DEMAND FOR A RECONSTITUTION OF THE JANATA'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AND RESOLVED TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST ALL THOSE PARTY MEMBERS WHO HAVE VIOLATED PARTY DISCIPLINE. THOSE ATTENDING THE CPB MEETING WERE PRIME MINISTER DESAI, DEFENSE MINISTER JAGJIVAN RAM, FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE, INDUSTRY MINISTER FERNANDES, CHANDRA SHEKHAR HIMSELF AND THREE OF THE JANATA'S FIVE GENERAL SECRETARIES. OF THE LATTER, ONLY RABI RAY, THE BLD REPRESENTATIVE AMONG THE GENERAL SECRETARIES, REPORTEDLY DISSENTED FROM THE BOARD'S DECISION. HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH, WHO IS CLEARLY BEHIND RAJ NARAIN'S ATTACKS, DID NOT ATTEND THE MEETING DUE TO HIS CONTINUING ILLNESS. (IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT CHARAN SINGH'S RESIGNATION FROM THE CPB AND NATIONAL EXECUTIVE STILL HAS NOT BEEN ACTED UPON BY THE JANATA LEADERSHIP.)

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3. THIS STERN ACTION AGAINST RAJ NARAIN'S INDISCIPLINE TOUCHED OFF A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY LAST NIGHT. BLD LEADERS QUICKLY HUDDLED TO PLAN THEIR RESPONSE TO THIS REBUFF BY THE JANATA'S OTHER CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS. CHARAN SINGH HAS NOT YET REACTED, AND EVEN RAJ NARAIN WAS CIRCUMSPECT IN TALKING TO NEWSMEN AFTER THE BOARD'S DECISION WAS ANNOUNED. TWO SENIOR EMISSARIES, FOREIGN MINISTER VAJPAYEE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER FERNANDES, ARE DUE TO CALL ON CHAN SINGH TODAY TO EXPLAIN THE CPB DECISION.

4. THE ACTION IS SIGNIFICANT IN SEVERAL RESPECTS. IT REPRESENTS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE PARTY'S TOP LEADERSHIP HAS TAKEN A FIRM AND UNEQUIVOCAL STAND AGAINST THE INDISCIPLINE AND FADCTIONALISM WHICH HAS PLAGUED THE JANATA FROM THE OUTSET. IN PREVIOUS CRISES BROUGHT ON MAINLY

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REF: NEW DELHI 9578

BY CHARAN SINGH AND HIS FOLLOWERS, THE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN AMBI-
VALENT, ALWAYS SEEKING PATCH-WORK SOLUTIONS TO DEFUSE THE IMMEDIATE
CRISIS WITHOUT ATTEMPTING TO ADDRESS THE MORE FUNDAMENTAL CAUSES.
ON THIS OCCASION, HOWEVER, THE SENIOR LEADERS EVIDENTLY
FELT IT WAS NECESSARY TO STAND UP TO CHARAN SINGH'S
BRINKMANSHIP AND DIRECTLY CONFRONT HIS APPOINTED AGENT, RAJ
NARAIN. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE OARD EVEN CHOSE TO IGNORE JANATA
ELDER STATESMAN J.P. NARAYAN, WHO HAD ADVISED AGAINST ANY HASTY
AND PRECIPITATE ACTIONS.

5. AS WE SURMISED IN REFTTEL, THE JANA SANGH, AS THE LARGEST
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CONSTITUENT OF THE JANATA, CLEARLY PLAYED THE DECISIVE ROLE IN
THIS ISSUE. VAJPAYEE AND GENERAL SECRETARY NANAJI DESHMUKH WERE
PARTIES TO THE DECISION, WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN REACHED WITHOUT
JANA SANGH APPROVAL. THE SANGHIS' CONCURRENCE IN THE ACTION
IS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF THEIR SUPPORT FOR STABILITY AND CONTINUITY
AT ALL LEVELS OF THE PARTY AND GOVT. IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES THEIR
CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE JANATA COALITION; NO MAJOR DECISIONS CAN BE

MADE WITHOUT THEIR APPROVAL.

6. CHARAN SINGH, RAJ NARAIN AND THE OTHER HARD-CORE BLD'ERS HAVE NOW BEEN ISOLATED FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF THE PARTY. THROUGH HIS RELENTLESS BRINKMANSHIP, THE HOME MINISTER HAS BACKED HIMSELF INTO A CORNER FROM WHICH IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO EXTRICATE HIMSELF. FOR ONCE, EVEN THE USUALLY UNRUFFLED MORARJI HAS TAKEN THE DECISIVE STEP OF ALIGNING HIMSELF AGAINST HIS OWN HOME MINISTER. SPECULATION IS RAMPANT ON THE NEXT MOVES. ACCORDING TO ONE VERSION, THE PRIME MINISTER MAY USE THE OPPORTUNITY TO RESHUFFLE HIS CABINET AND DROP RAJ NARAIN FROM THE GOVT. CHARAN SINGH MAY RESIGN FROM THE GOVT HIMSELF IN A FIT OF PIQUE. THE EFFECT OF THE BLD'S ISOLATION ON THE STATE GOVTS WHICH IT CONTROLS IN TANDEM WITH THE JANA SANGH (BIHAR, U.P. AND HARYANA) IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS AT THIS POINT; IN ANY EVENT, THE JANA SANGH HAS SERVED NOTICE TO CHARAN SINGH THAT THEIR "MARRIAGE OF CONVENICNCE" IS VALID ONLY UP TO A CERTAIN POINT. EVEN THOUGH THE JANA SANGHIS HAVE NOT BEEN ENTIRELY HAPPY WITH CHANDRA SHEKHAR AS JANATA PRESIDENT, IN THE END THEY SIDED WITH HIM AND, MOR IMPORTANTLY, WITH MORARJI.

7. WE BELIEVE THAT EVEN IF CHRAN SINGH GOES OVER THE BRINK AND PULLS OUT OF THE GOVT AND PARTY, SUCH A DRASTIC MOVE PROBABLY WOULD NOT SERIOUSLY ENDANGER THE DESAI GOVT'S MAJORITY IN THE LOK SABHA. OUR SOURCES TELLUS THAT THE HOME MINISTER HAS BECOME SO ALIENATED FROM VARIOUS FACTIONS OF THE BLD THAT WERE HE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO QUIT HE WOULD TAKE ONLY ABOUT 25 TO 30 MP'S WITH HIM--NOT ENOUGH TO THREATEN THE GOVT'S STABILITY. CHRAN SINGH MAY REALIZE THIS AND MAY ULTIMATELY DECIDE TO SWALLOW HIS PRIDE, ACCEPT THE REBUFF AND PULL BACK FROM THE BRINK RATHER THAN RISK EXILING HIMSELF IN THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS. PRESUMABLY, IN THEIR MEETING WITH THE HOME MINISTER TODAY, VAJPAYEE AND FERNANDES WILL TRY TO SOFTEN THE BLOW AND OFFER CHARAN SINGH A FACE-SAVING WQY OUT OF THE IMPASSE. THE BULK OF THE JANATA LEADERSHIP HAS FINALLY TAKEN A FIRM STAND ON INTERNAL PARTY MATTERS; THE EVENTS OF THE NEXT FEW DAYS COULD WELL SET THE PATTERN FOR THE RULING PARTY'S CONDUCT IN THE FUTURE
BLOOD

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